

THE FIGHTING MEN OF CANADA



By
Douglas Leader Durkin

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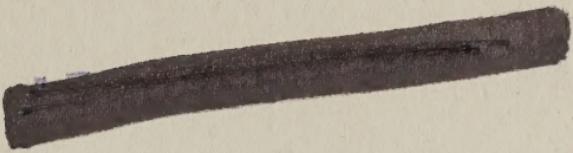
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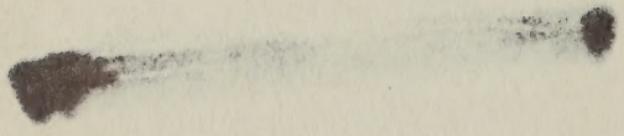
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THE FIGHTING MEN
OF CANADA

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THE FIGHTING MEN OF CANADA

BY
DOUGLAS LEADER DURKIN



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TO
THE CANADIANS AT THE FRONT

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PRELUDE

*God spake to me,
"Soul, sing one song and die!"*

*And forthwith, through the long, long days I sought
Some classic theme, some hidden, unborn thought*

*Formed in a heaven too high
For men to see;*

*My weary brain
Conceived the melody,
A new-found strain, sublime, all-perfect, good,
But strange—so strange that no man understood!*

*God heard and said to me,
"Soul, seek again!"*

*Dejectedly
Into the streets I stole;
I found a tear, a smile, a beating heart,
And turned away to write my song apart;
Then God said, "Come, my soul,
And sit with Me!"*

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THE FIGHTING MEN OF CANADA

I

THERE'S a moving on the water where the ships have
lain asleep,

There's a rising of the wind along the shore;
There's a cloud that's heading landward, ever dark'ning,
from the deep,

There's a murmur where the crowd was mute before.
And the order's "Come together!"

And the word is "Down below!
There'll be forty kinds o' weather
When the winds begin to blow!"

II

We have counted up our shekels, we have turned our
pennies in,

We have kissed the girls and closed the waiting line;
For there's business over yonder, dirty business for our
kin,

And we're shipping out together on the brine.
And the call is "Do your duty!"

Bon voyage! Farewell! Adieu!
There'll be time for love and beauty
When you've seen the business through!"

III.

There's a hush along the river where the tide goes out
to sea.

And a song that echoes softly to the shore,
For the boats have set to seaward, creeping downward
in the lee,

And a grim old dog of war leads on before.

And we sing a song of seamen
As we pass the answering hill,
"We are Britons, we are freemen,
And we'll live as freemen still!"

IV

Myriad-mouthed they hail our coming, break in thunders
of applause,

'Tis the Lion Mother's welcome to her brood!
They have found us worthy kinsmen, bred to serve a
worthy cause,

Men of British nerve and born of British blood.

But the Captain's eye is leering,
And the word is "Do your bit!
There'll be time enough for cheering
When the guns begin to spit!"

V

God, the long mad days of waiting, eating dust and
spitting blood,

While the bullets rake the trenches where we lie!
Curse the hours that hold us steady! Damn the Captain's
sober mood,

Let us run the fiends to hell or let us die!

But the Captain's word is given,
"Hold the line—we're one to ten!
What's it matter—hell or heaven—
So we die like fighting men?"

VI

Call it lust or call it honour—call it glory in a name!

We're a handful, more or less, of what we were;
But we praise the great Almighty that we stuck and
 played the game

Till we chased them at the double to their lair!

For the word came, "Up and over!"

 And our answer was a yell

As we scrambled out of cover—

 And we dealt the dastards hell!

THE CALL

CAME once a call on the midnight,
Rose once a cry from the sea,
"Daughter of mine in my day-pride,
Art thou still daughter to me?"
Spoke then the heart of a nation,
Clarion-voiced from the hill,
"Lo, in our day thou hast long been our stay,
Mother art thou to us still!"

Came then a murmur of voices,
Sounds of the marching of men;
Hearts that had slumbered in silence
Quickenèd with passion again;
Down where the rumble of traffic
Grew with the dawn of the day
Broke the stern beat of a drum in the street,
Marshalling men for the fray.

Cold-hearted stewards of credit,
Faint-hearted counters of pelf,
Leaped at the blare of the trumpet
Free from the shackles of self;
Haggling tongues on the market,
Babbling lips on the square,
Fashion'd a word that the high heavens heard,
Whispered it once in a prayer.

Silent-tongued dwellers on frontiers,
Peace-loving souls on the grange,
Brawny-limbed brood of the mountains,
Weather-bronzed sons of the range,
Stout-hearted hewers of forests,
Brown-beaten men of the soil
Heard from afar the grim challenge of war—
Rose in the sweat of their toil.

Back went the word from a people
Bred with a will to be free,
"Mother, thy daughter stands ready
Still to prove daughter to thee!"
Spoke then the heart of the Mother,
Swelling with pride in her Day,
"Soul of my soul, where the battle-clouds roll,
We are one soul in the fray!"

THE MEN WHO STOOD

*WHY, with the odds ten to one, did they stay,
Playing the game for a wager of blood,
Holding a legion of demons at bay
For a day and a night, for a night and a day—
Do you ask why they stood?*

Shed on the soul of a man of the plains
Beams of a sun with a quickening ray,
Fill the young blood of his wild coursing veins
Full of the pride of his orient day;
Trace on his brow in the light of the morn
Symbols of dreams of a nation to be,
Touch him to visions of cities unborn
Crowding the shores of a shimmering sea;

Bring to the soul of a man of the hills
Harrowing winds from the canyons of snow,
Give him to know in the thing that he wills
Men can be gods though they suffer below;
Show him the stars where they set on the rim
Crowning the granite that lifts to the blue,
Tune the great chords of his soul to the hymn
Sung by the planets the living night through;

Give to the soul of a man of the north
Faith in the blood of an unwithered race,
Joy in the labour of infinite worth,
Vigour that grows to an exquisite grace;
Breathe on him tales of his grim-visaged sires,
Teach him the curse of a kingdom in thrall,
Fill him with hate for a nation of liars,
Quicken his heart with a clarion's call;

*Then, with the odds ten to one, bid him stay,
Face the hell-horrors or welter in blood,
Holding the line with the legions at bay,
And he'll die in his night or he'll live in his day,
But they'll know that he stood!*

ROLL, ROLL, ROLL

I

THEY drags you out o' mornin's and you takes the trail
in fours,
And you jogs up at the double for a puffin' hour or so;
'Then they stands you in the open where the beefy
sergeant roars,
And they talks a lot o' piffle that they thinks you ought
to know.

For it's roll, roll, roll—
Rollin' up to glory;
Oh, it's roll, roll, roll,
In the rain or in the sun—
We're a-rollin' up to glory with a blanket and a
gun.

II

They talks on good behaviour till you're holdin' of yer
head,
If you argues with an N.C.O. they puts you in the clink;
They tells you when to wash yer feet and when to go to
bed,
And there's hell to pay with int'rest if you take an extra
drink!

So it's roll, roll, roll—
Rollin' up to glory;
Oh, it's roll, roll, roll—
How's a man to have his fun
When they orders you to sleep before the night
is half begun?

III

They runs you down to action in a jiggin' cattle-car,
Then they leads you over cobble-stones at twenty mile a
day;
When you've lost yer bloomin' bearin's and you don't
know where you are
They packs you into billets on a half a pound o' hay.

And it's roll, roll, roll—
Rollin' up to glory;
Oh, it's roll, roll, roll—
If it happens we should die,
Then we'll find the way to heaven or we'll know
the reason why.

IV

They pokes you into trenches where you hear the bullets
fly,
When you duck yer head or whimper you're the regi-
ment's disgrace;
Then they packs you full of bully beef and sends you
out to die,
And they throws you in a hole and sticks another in
your place!

Oh, it's roll, roll, roll—
Rollin' up to glory;
Oh, it's roll, roll, roll,
Where the crazy bullets run,
But we'll roll up Piccadilly when the fightin'
days are done!

V

Oh, we never was a credit to our brothers back at home,
We were cussed for blighted sinners and we never knew
our prayers;
But we'll fight like very devils till the days o' kingdom
come,
And we'll square accounts with Heaven when we climb
the golden stairs.

So it's roll, roll, roll—
Rollin' up to glory;
Oh, it's roll, roll, roll,
Till we settle with the Hun;
Then it's rollin' back to Blighty when the
settlin' days are done!

CARRY ON!

Is the game all up, are the boys all in?

Never mind, old man—carry on!

Have you met defeat where you thought to win?

Play up, old man—carry on!

Are your eyes a-swim in a blinding sun?

Are your best men crippled, your team-mates done?

Are the wagers against you, five to one?

Buck up, old man! Carry on! Carry on!

Are you groggy and dazed at the close of the round?

Come back, old man—carry on!

Jump in and mix it, and hold your ground—

That's it, old man—carry on!

Do you wish like sin that the match was through?

All right—your man may be all in too—

He's probably bluffing the same as you;

Lead out, old man! Carry on! Carry on!

Is your line in the air and your colonel dead?

All right, old man—carry on!

Are your picked men shattered and plugged with lead?

What odds, old man?—carry on!

Lie low, hold on, keep pegging away—

It's grit that counts in the game you play,

And it's grit, after all, that wins the day—

Stand to, old man! Carry on! Carry on!

THE RIP O' HADES

*WOULD you hear a little story,
(Not a bang-up tale o' glory)
But a bit of good enough, sir, just the same—
How a poor soul, damned for fair,
Took his summons, made his prayer,
Cashed in sudden, closed his eyes and quit the game?*

He was born in stormy weather when the stars were out
of tune,

When the Lord of Heaven blundered in his ways,
Just a soulless rip o' Hades farrowed in a luckless moon
From a dame who loved the devil all her days.

There was never priest to bless him, there was never kiss
of maid,

There was never virgin smile to wish him well;
There was just a throb of passion from a low-born
drunken jade

Ere she signed her own eternal soul to hell.

When he drank the milk of venom from a vampire's
poison'd dugs,

When he lisped his first low curses to the skies,
When he went to school to Fortune, ate with harlots,
slept with thugs,

Primed his soul on petty crimes and devil's lies;
When he stacked the cards with Heaven, when he
tossed the dice with Death,

There was never God nor Christ nor woman's love;
But the Circumstance that damned him when he drew
his first faint breath

Wrote his record for the Book of Life above.

When he trailed the crowded city, shared his booty with
the gang,

Crawled to hiding from the law that man had made,
He was still a soulless devil biding still his time to hang,
Doomed to die the death of Hell—but unafraid!

He was still the hound of Hades, hunting still the devil's
game,

With the brand of Satan seared upon his brow,
Still the low, ditch-farrowed issue of a thing without a
name,

Snatching blessings from his curse of Here and Now.

When he joined the brown battalions, set his face to
meet the dawn,

Where the vandal-lust of princes gathered toll,
Never call of Christian duty drew his jaunty spirit on,
Never sacred thought or impulse stirred his soul;
There was n'er a farewell token, ne'er a prayer to God
above,

There was ne'er a wish of luck or fond good-bye;
But the hungry kiss of passion from his little light o'
love

And a half-shed tear that lingered in her eye.

When he left his Flemish billet, took his turn within the
line,

He could smile at slush and slime and beds of mud;
Though he railed at God Almighty, he could stand and
never whine,

He could rush in hell-to-split through fields of blood;
He could wriggle out to No-man's Land and join the
phantom host

Where the dead arose and stalked about in white;
He could roll a quid beneath a flare or tango with a
ghost,

He could dally where the bullets ripped the night.

When he waited for the morning, when he stood to in
the gloom,

While the dizzy shock of thunder woke the night,
When he heard the dogs of vengeance barking out their
iron doom,

All his heart was up with passion for the fight.
He would whistle "Tipperary" when he heard the bullets
whine,

He would caper when the saucy Maxim's whirred;
He would curse the tardy captain when he held the
eager line,

He was first up when the captain gave his word.

When we charged them at the double he was first across
the field,

He was first to use his steel upon the Hun;
He was last to stay his fury when we saw the Bosches
yield,

And he damned them all for dastards when we won;
Then he railed in ribald challenge, we would meet them
one to four,

And he turned to chide the captain for his stand,
But behind us in the open lay the captain in his gore,
Striving still to voice a word of stern command.

Then we heard this rip o' Hades fling his curse at God
above

As he tossed his belt and tunic to the ground;
With a parting prayer to heaven for his little light o'
love,

He was up and out of cover at a bound;

He was raked with zipping bullets, but he mocked them
with his grin;
Then we saw him fall—"They've got me, boys!" he
cried;
But before he crawled to cover he had lugged his captain
in—
Then he cursed his luck infernal—and he died!

*So you've heard the little story—
Call it not a tale of glory—
It's a story something worth, sir, just the same;
Though his words were devil's lies,
Somewhere tears in woman's eyes
Plead God's mercy on a man who played the game.*

THE WAY OF IT

NEVER a prince on a palfrey,
 Never a queen in a bower,
But somewhere the graves on the hillsides
 Have told of the price of power!

Never a nation's manhood
 Works in a day of peace,
But the hearts of the nation's bravest
 Have burst that the strife might cease!

Never a nation's beauty
 Treads in her beaded feet,
But the hearts of the nation's fairest
 Have wept at the drum's loud beat!

Never a nation's mothers
 Croon to their little ones,
But the hearts of the nation's noblest
 Have bled for their gallant sons!

Never a nation's children
 Laugh in the sun and the flowers,
But the hearts of a nation's wee folk
 Have sobbed through the long dead hours!

Never a shout of triumph,
 Never a song of love,
But somewhere white lips in the moonlight
 Have cursed to the skies above!

Never a nation's To-morrow,
Never a Day-to-be,
But the blood of stout-limbed freemen
Has purpled the waves of the sea!

Never a Heaven of mercy
Breaks in the golden light,
But somewhere behind it in darkness
Yawneth a Hell in the night!

IF!

THE cruel god of Circumstance
Once asked a woman's naked soul,
(A blasted soul, a soul that Chance
Had black-damned with a single glance)
 What magic word could make her whole.

“What word?” The woman raised her head:
 “What word can make my dead soul live?”
She smiled. “I know one word,” she said,
“Can save—or damn a life instead!”
 And sadly then she answered—“*If!*”

THE MOTHER SOUL

*SPOKE Dai, the Mother, the Giver of Life, unto Man
Where leaped the red flashes of madness, the fires of
Death:*

I

Look, I have given ye sons, I have mothered ye men—
This would I say ere ye seek me to wed me again:
See the deep red of the earth and the rivers of red;
Mark on the winds of the dawn the black stench of the
dead!

II

When, at the top of the World, in the birthday of Time,
Virgin ye found me and breathed in your passionate
prime,

Full of the blush of the day and the flame of desire;
When at the fall of the Sun in the sea-fields of fire
Fairly ye wooed me and led to the cover of Night,
Breathing of races to be in the Ages of Light—
Was it for this that I came, in my blindness, to yield,
Bowed to ye so ye might scatter my Flesh in the field?

III

Long have I wooed ye to labour together in Peace,
Wept in the soul of my soul that the slaughter should
cease;
Wept for the man-hunted man and the foe-broken foe,
Searing the heart and the brain with the madness of
woe;
Oft have ye given the word, but your word is a lie!
Still ye return to the steel and the reek fills the sky
Where from your flame-spitting tubes leap the quick
tongues of Death,
Wasting the flesh of my flesh that I quickened with
breath;
Still ye return with the bitters of Hate in your blood,
Seeking a life for a life in your barbarous mood.

IV

This would I speak to ye, then, while your Hate-fires
rage,
Speak from the top of my World, in the dawn of my
Age,
Red in the light of my Day springing fresh from the
east:
Quit ye the mode of the Brute and the rule of the Beast,
Seeking your glory in carnage, your profit in rape;
Take from your high-moulded brow the low dream of
the ape,
Filling your nights with designs for the blasting of life,
Glooming your days with the smoke rolling up from the
strife!

Mother of man, in the throes that have given ye men,
Long have I waited and heard yet again and again
Battle-shock splitting the earth with the thunder of
doom!

Never again in the warmth of my life-giving womb
Will I breathe soul of my soul into warrior clay;
Never again will I carry the blue of the day
Down through my blood to the eyes of a man yet to be—
Or writhe in my agony setting a warrior free!
This is the word that I give ye; go think ye apart—
Woo me again when the Hate-flame is dead in your
heart.

*Thus Dai, the Mother, the Life-giver, spake unto Man
Where leaped the red flashes of madness, the fires of
Death.*

TRAILS O' MINE

*DO ye wait, old trails o' mine,
Twisting, turning trails o' mine?
Do ye listen for my footfall coming up the winding shore?
Are my secrets with ye still
Where ye top the proudest hill?
Do ye wonder, wonder, wonder, that I come to ye no
more?*

There's a wind among the willows, there's a cloud above
the shore,

There's a grey sky sloping downward to the plain;
On the hills the gods have spent their tubes of colour by
the score,

And have washed their long reed-brushes in the rain;
There's a whisper in the crisping grass where breezes
scurry by,

There's a calling from the Northland in the night,
There's a sound of whistling pinions and a plaintive
broken cry

Wafted downward from the wild-fowl in his flight.

There's a chattering where the wood-folk garner in their
winter's store,

And a lisping where the brown leaves wait and die;
All the days return to silence, for the gods have sealed
the door,

And the warrior-ghosts are leaping in the sky.

Now the hunter's door is opened, and the maiden's lodge
is shut,

Now the musk-rat breaks the slough-pond's icy rim;
Now the bull-moose seeks his shelter and the beaver
builds his hut,

And the bear returns to make his lair trim.

Where the lazy-moving heavens touch the range's
haughty crest

I would stand with face to windward in a gale,
I would find me wooded shelter where a man may take
his rest

When a-weary from a long day on the trail;
I would pull—an ye would let me—fragrant cedar from
the limb,

I would rake the fire and range the branches there,
I would lay me where my eyes could trace the valley's
eastern rim,

And the gods could do the rest—I know their care.

Have ye sought your shifty bearings in a blizzard from
the north?

Have ye split the rock-bound silence with your yell?
Has your heart beat high in triumph as you dragged
your quarry forth

From the hidden spot to leeward where it fell?
Can you shake the dice with Heaven, throw for throw,
and take your luck

Though the cubes seem plugged to win for all but
you?

Can you smile your "Even so!" and cover wagers with
your pluck?

Can you stay—for all you lose—and see it through?

Never mind—ye never knew it—never felt the red blood
thrill

With a passion for the silences of God;
Never faced the grim Eternal, read Creation's cryptic
Will,

Stole her secrets, sued her love and cursed her rod!

Dear old trails that knew my coming, are ye waiting
for me still

Where the shades steal upward to the mountain's
brow?

Do ye wait my footfall's echo coming weary from the
hill?

Oh, my heart is filled with longing for you now!

*Trails o' mine, be patient still,
Keep my secrets with ye till*

*I have counted out the long days in a land across the sea;
Then the days of sweet delight*

When we've finished with the fight

*And I've packed my kit and started up the trails so dear
to me!*

THE FATHER SPEAKS

I

I HAVE asked myself, yes, every day
Since he gripped my hand and hurried away,
"If the news should come that the lad was dead,
How would you take it?" And I have said,
(To myself of course), "Ah, my heart would break,
But I'd do my best for his mother's sake!"

II

For a man's a man, you see, and I—
Well, times will come when a man must lie;
And I said to myself, "I will lie to her,
And she'll never see with her eyes a-blur
From the tears in them—and she'll never know."
And I thought to myself that I'd maybe go
Away by myself somewhere and sit
Alone awhile; and if for a bit
I quit the struggle and bowed my head
And wept for loneliness, "Well," I said,
"What odds? No one will the wiser be,
No one will know but God and me."

III

And then—it came. The lad was dead.
"Killed in action," the message said.

IV

That was days ago, and I haven't slept
One hour since—and I've scarcely wept,
For I've not been sad—and my heart is light—
And I've not been lonely. For every night
I have seen him here; he has talked with me;
And all day long he has walked with me;

And every day in the crowded street,
Where go the busy, hurrying feet
Of the shuffling crowd, I have felt him near
Freeing my soul of a nameless Fear.

V

But a man's a man, and the heart will fail,
And the days grow stern, and the lights grow pale;
And the night comes down when faith goes out,
And the soul gropes blind in a maze of doubt.

VI

And the hour will come, as it came to me
Just yestereve, when we cannot see
Why the thing we planned must never grow
Into the thing we hoped for. So—
Last night it came. I remembered how
When the lad was small I had touched his brow
Where he lay asleep in his little bed,
Weary from play. And my heart had fed
Greedily then with a foolish pride,
And a foolish joy that I could not hide
From his mother's eyes, on the future when
The lad would stand in a world of men
Playing a man's full part. And I lay
Last night—all night—till the rising day
Broke in the east—and I could not sleep
And I watched the grey day slowly creep
Over a cold world lately dead,
And the long grey shafts that slowly spread
Over a cold sky. And I cried
Out of a heart where hope had died,
“No rising day and no dawn for me!”
For life was dark and I could not see
Through the heavy mists, and I looked abroad
On a cheerless world where there was no God.

VII

Then in the silence I bowed and wept
For the lad that was gone. But a Presence crept
Close to my side and there fell a word
So soft, so still, that I scarcely heard,
"Why weepest thou in the night for me?
Dost thou recall when I went from thee
Smiling to take a man's full share
And render a man's account? 'Twas there
Life's morning broke like a day new born
Out of the clouds of night, and morn
Came on my soul. Did you miss it then—
Miss the meaning of life, that men
Who are men indeed must come to know
Somewhere, sometime, if they ever grow
Into the stature that God ordains,
Or free themselves of the sordid chains
That weigh like lead? There is work to do
For men that are men, for such as you
Whose sons have gone up the long white trail
Over the hilltops, past the pale
Of earthly vision. Count it joy
That somewhere undaunted stood a boy
Who was flesh of your flesh, who knew the thrill
Of the crowded moment and strove to fill
His last sweet hour with something true
To the blood he boasted. Only the few
Have lived supremely. Take his word
That over the shock of the battle he heard
His father's voice that bade him stand,
Felt the strength of his sire's hand
Double the strength of his own, and died
Unconquered still. Know that his pride
Was ever in this, that his record proved

He had accounted the life he loved
Only less dear than honor. Then
Turn to the task of your day again,
Heart-high, soul-strong, with a living will
Mounting the height and singing still."

VIII

Thus spoke the voice, and upon my sight
Sudden the day broke silver white.
"Dawn!" I cried. "It is dawn for me,
And the rising hour of a Day-to-be!"

THE BLACK SHEEP

THERE were seven in a flock, such a proper little flock,
And their fleeces were all as white as snow,
And they framed a little creed for their little souls to
heed

And to ponder on wherever they should go.

“We shall never rage or fight, nor go prowling late at
night,
Nor sport near the bramble or the mire;
We shall never bring regret to our dam, nor cause a fret
For our noble and our very proper sire.”

But that very proper dam bred a curly little lamb
That the sire of the flock wouldn’t own,
For its woolly little back was a splashy inky black,
So they left it out to grow up all alone.

When the fussy little ewe heard it bleating down below,
Where they left it to sicken in the cold,
She stole out in the night, though she knew it wasn’t
right,
And she suckled it—but never, never told!

And this little patch of sin, thus rejected by his kin,
Every day nursed a hankering to roam;
But at night he loved to revel, did this frisky little devil,
While his brothers said their decent prayers at home.

All the proper little sheep ran together in a heap
When they heard him come tearing up the lane;
And they thanked their God in heaven, did this Pharisaic
seven,
For such fleeces as their own without a stain.

In a spell of dirty weather he would chew his knotted tether,

He would cock his ears and lash his inky tail;
There was venom in his eye when the winds were blowing high—

He could face the very devil in a gale.

Still this black sheep loved no other as he loved his little mother,

And he wept like a sinner at the form
When she pulled him to his feet from the slough of grim defeat,

Or lugged him into shelter from the storm.

Once there came a wolfish howl, oh, a hungry chilling growl,

With a note like the harbinger of doom,
And the seven that were white stood and shivered in their fright,

And the sire's proper face was veiled in gloom.

When the hungry wolf and bold took a peep into the fold,

Just a wolfish little peep for wolfish ends,
The nervous little dam called her wicked little lamb,
Steering homeward from a riot with his friends.

Then the little imp of hell shook his saucy little bell
(And for once his kin rejoiced that he had sinned),
For he loved the name of trouble, and he came up at the double,

And he got the lanky robber in the wind.

For a fiendish hour or so there were wolfish wails of woe,
There was yelping and growling in the night,
For the lamb, though poorly bred, had been taught to
use his head
And to put his best feet forward in a fight.

When the wolf limped back to cover, after all the scrap
was over,
He had framed a new decision all his own;
Though he made a goodly dinner on the poor benighted
sinner—
He would leave his woolly brothers quite alone.

In the fold the zealous seven paid their proper dues to
heaven
That had saved them from such a horrid fate,
But the fussy little dam wept a little for her lamb,
Though she never, never told her proper mate.

PEACE AND WAR

I

Now the upward-reaching ages find us looking back again
To our world's half-risen morning, aping Adam, mocking
Cain!

While they hacked out shapeless dogmas, carved their
nameless trinities,

Hugged their petty dispensations, conned their pallid
litanies,

Did our huddling priesthood reckon that within Creation's
womb

Stirred the lust, the hot blood-passion that should make
the world a tomb?

How our cavilling quillmen scribbled of a day when war
should cease!

How our churchmen moved the people with their paltry
prayers for peace!

II

Pray for Peace! Old men in chapels chattering nonsense
to the skies;

Prating women, white-lipped, wet-eyed; hucksters mut-
tering blasphemies!

Give us peace for truck and trade, for bartering souls
and battenning kings,

Peace to steep the garb of Freedom in the blood of
underlings!

III

Ye have had your peace in plenty—did ye find it curse
or boon?

Choose ye Peace with curse of soul or War from cursed
Greed immune?

War where fire and blasting bullet leap to silence cursing
men—
Peace where cursed starveling offspring fling their curse
at God again?
War with widows, homeless, shattered, weeping where
their masters fell—
Peace with unwed mothers cursing heaven and sinking
down to hell?
Bestial War with ravish'd maidens screaming death-de-
fiance still—
Dove-like Peace with murder'd Christs and Golgoth's
gloom on every hil?
Choose ye then! Is War inhuman though they sow the
field with skulls,
Though they spy a thousand merchant-men and rip their
bellied hulls?

IV

Time was when the Roman Eagle screamed her challenge
from the shore,
Met, and fought, and slew a foeman worthy of the name
he bore;
Saxon Alfred found his freemen sturdy-limbed and
ruddy-browed,
Wooing mates untamed by fashion, still unschooled to
court the crowd;
Briton's word was Briton's honour—never blushed a
Briton then
For the double word in dealing to confound his brother
men;
Rose a day when Spanish galleons set the helm and
swept the main,
But our English seamen chilled their hearts and quelled
their high disdain;

Pursy kings and fatted bishops wooing minions in the
night
Paled at cry of English yeomen rising to defend the
right!

V

Has it fled—that haughty spirit—crowning low-born,
nothing base,
Filling years with golden legend, earnest of a happy
race?
Is it gone forever from us? Have we flung to grovelling
swine
Jewels that had crowned the nation, had each said, “I’ll
hold to mine!”

VI

“What of Progress?” asks your spaniel-hearted servant
of decree;
“Would ye scorn the Age’s genius shackling powers on
land and sea?”
Progress reared on dollar-value, pounds and pence the
rule of worth—
Thus ye measure men and choose your gilded masters of
the earth!
For the others, leaden-hearted, leaden-faced, the count-
less throng—
All are underlings, by breeding doomed to share the
system’s wrong—
Witless, calloused brood of Mammon! Yet I saw the
digger’s tear
Seam his weather’d face on hearing the first lark-song
of the year!
Though ye rear a thousand Sidons, plant a port on every
bay,
Out-dream all Phœnicia’s princes in the cargoes of one
day,

Yet if in one unborn child ye plant the hate of God and man
While the mother, helpless, hopeless, empties life to fill your plan,
All your trade is trinket-trafficking, your cargoes worthless gauds,
And ye thrive in Belial-cities, sons of Belial, born of clods;
Sons of Belial, dedicating holy altars to a name,
Pagan still, and worse than pagan in your Christian want of shame;
Bowed in worship at the shrine of heathen gods in Christian guise—
Zealots of another Moloch, trusting Baal's decent lies!

VII

Ye have had your peace in plenty—did it give ye men of power,
Men of true world-soul, or slaves to petty factions of an hour?
Have ye made a People's Empire where the best is honoured first,
Where the good in all may grow for all and rise to quell the worst?
Empires still are built on Honour, not on pact and party creed—
Built of men, not clouts and patches, ravening rape and shameless greed!

VIII

What of war? What though the challenge shrills to wake an Empire's night?
We have made us men of valour who shall match the Teuton's might!

They have stung the shaggy Lion, they have waked her
 sleeping brood,
They have stirred a mighty impulse that will work a
 Nation's good;
What though sullen dogs have slipped the leash to
 smirch the name we bear—
We have loosed our grey dogs of the seas and chased
 them to their lair;
We have raised a flag above the dune and held the Hun
 at bay,
While our island millions cleared their brows and rose
 to meet the day;
Though the lurking pirates wait below to blast the
 shallop's keel,
Though they spread the shores with derelicts and ring
 the isles with steel,
Though their savage legions reach the sea across a field
 of shame,
Though they fill the night with havoc-craft—they earn
 a craven's name!

IX

Hymn of Hate or Prayer of Passion—cries that prove a
 baser kind—
Think not these could rouse a royal race of noble heart -
 and mind;
We have heard their empty orisons, such rites as pagans
 feign,
Rising where the reek of battle masks the sky and
 shrouds the plain;
We have heard the blaring trumpets of the proud
 Assyrian host,
We have numbered all their millions—but we scorn their
 idle boast!

Paynim prince or timely prophet—these can court a
coward's awe;
But the Judge of Nations speaks a word to them that
know the Law;
Saith the Judge, "Lo, knaves have made their nation's
Word a nation's Lie;
But the Truth must ever conquer and the Base must ever
die!"

X

This the word that makes us heroes—this the meaning
of the strife:
"All the Worth of Life is worthless were it bought with
less than Life!"

GOOD-BYES, A LA MODE

I

MISTRESS A and Mistress B
Toyed with little cups of tea,
Whispered little things they heard
So-and-So say—word for word;
Blackened, every time they spoke,
Names of fairly decent folk;
Spread the scandal You-know-who
Told of Madame Well-to-do;
Who was straight, and who was not—
And more of such damned silly rot!
Then they lingered near the door,
Kissed a dozen times or more,
Sang “So long!” and Mistress A
Lied once yet—and went her way!

II

Juliet and Romeo
(Not the two that, long ago,
Mister Shakespeare wrote about)
Sat and watched the tide go out;
Watched the moon above the sea—
Sighed and lied most soulfully;
Wished they might for evermore
Sit upon that same old shore;
Held warm hands and kissed a bit—
But what's the use of telling it!
Long each clung to each when they
Sobbed their good-byes, R and J;
Each gave pledge in solemn vow—
Thought they meant it anyhow!

III

Private X and Sapper Y
Met once just to say good-bye;
From away back they had stood
Side by side as old pals should;
Now that X was called away,
Both had, oh, so much to say—
Never said a word of it!
They cussed a bit—and swore a bit—
And shook a bit—but spoke no word—
Then X wheeled quick and jumped on board!
Someone placed a credit then
To the names of these two men,
Wrote it in the Book above—
“X and Y—two men who love!”

THE MEN OF ST. ANNE'S

YE, who go up to the shrines to-day
To old St. Anne's, where the good men pray,
Kneeling a while in the silent nave,
With eyes down-dropt, forgetful, grave,
Pray not now for your world-stained souls ;
What, will it matter so much at last
Whether you're damned in your souls and cast
Into some hell where the midnight rolls
Heavy with death? There are millions more
Who have knocked in vain on a God-sealed door!

Pray not either for victory
On a blood-drenched plain or a purpled sea ;
Pleading, wet-eyed, with muttering lips,
For the men who have gone to the sea in ships,
Or stormed the hill in the rising day ;
Have ye not heard how the Trojans fought,
How the Persians died, how the Romans wrought,
How the men of old hacked out their way
And stalked through blood? In a few short years
Children will laugh where you drop your tears!

Pray the rather for such as stay
Waiting the dawn of an awful day
When drains shall choke from the rising flood
Fed from the gutters deep-gorged with blood
Washed from the streets by the fallen rain ;
Ponder a while on a time when clay
Leaping with madness shall slay and slay
Such as were gods in a world of gain
And a world of rape. Count well your beads
At St. Anne's to-day, ye men of the creeds!

THE WESTERN SPIRIT

*WHAT is the Western Spirit?
Speak, for the World would hear!*

And the mountains called—
Send to the eastern sun-gates,
 To the wild beast in his den,
Where the rud-red drops of a rising day
 Leap in the veins of men;
Choose from the waking millions,
 Sons of their fair-browed dames,
Into their souls put a new-world dream
 To fire their halting frames!

And the cities spake—
Give to us men of purpose,
 Born with an iron will,
Men who have failed and have risen again,
 Bound to be freemen still;
Reared from the muck of serfdom,
 Sprung from the hero-germ,
Men that are steel for a nation's frame,
 Pillars of granite firm!

And the prairies cried—
Go to the sires of the Northland;
 Beckon their sons to the sea,
Speak to their clean-limbed freemen-youth,
 And bid them come to me;
Back with your pallid princes,
 Hold to your tainted clout;
Men of the world's best breeding
 Must hew our nation out!

FRITZ

I

You blustered and fussed with your neighbours at large,

You blithered a lot in the height of your day;
But all your tall cussin' and swellin' of gorge
Was just between Willie and our little George—

Leastwise we all thought it would finish that way.

But Fritz, Fritz, Fritz,

Now what was you dreamin' on, Fritz,
While we was a-laughin' to hear you Gott straffin'
And givin' old Johnny Bull fits?

II

You heard Willie rant of his place in the sun,

Of his seat in the Trinity, makin' it four;
He jabbered a lot about nations undone,

And he grinned when he told how the rotters would run
From the Almighty's pets—and the Lord knows what
more!

And Fritz, Fritz, Fritz,

You swallowed it, didn't you, Fritz?
You thought him the wiser, your little tin Kaiser,
Whose gibberish addled your wits!

III

He winked at his word and he went out to pray,
He called on his lords and they argued it well;
They filled themselves bumpers and drank to the Day,
Then gave you the word and you hurried away,
And started in raisin' particular hell!
Oh, Fritz, Fritz, Fritz,
And how you did startle us, Fritz,
When you marched through the cities a-singin' hate-
ditties
And blowin' the country to bits.

IV

With the help o' the Lord you was goin' it strong,
You capered o' nights on the graves o' your foes;
But we're in the game now till the last dog is hung,
And we've brought a few million "young rotters" along
Who are payin' back much of the stuff that we owes.
Poor Fritz, Fritz, Fritz!
And how do you like it, eh, Fritz?
You crowded in your heyday—you thought we had
died, eh?
A man's never dead till he quits!

DREAMS

I

THERE lived a youth, a simple youth,
Who dreamed a dream beside the way;
A simple dream it was he dreamed—
A dream of work, a dream of play,
A little dream of every day,
A dream of things much as they seemed
Without the bitterness of truth;
Some smiling cynic passing near
Heard all the dream and with a sneer
He told the youth his dream gods lied—
'Tis said the little dreamer died!

II

There lived a maiden with a smile,
A simple maid she was and shy;
And she did dream a dream of love,
And as she dreamed her radiant eye
Beamed love on every passer-by;
But while her fairy dream she wove
She waited for true love the while;
There came a thing in human guise
Who snuffed the light that lit her eyes
And left her. Then *she* sinned, they said—
At any rate they found her dead!

III

There lived a mother and a child,
A simple mother sweet and true;
And she did dream of all the years
The boy should grow and learn to do
The task a man is fashioned to;
And as she dreamed she shed soft tears—
Her mother-heart with joy was wild!
Then sudden on her dream there broke
A cry, "To arms!"—The mother woke!
Ten thousand sons sleep side by side—
What wonder if the mother died?

SILHOUETTES

Two lovers on the sea-shore, cheek on cheek against the moon ;
A bugler on a hill-top sounding forth a battle-cry ;
A gathering of men within a market-place at noon ;
A maiden at the wayside where the brown files hurry by ;
A forward rush of legions, drooping shapes upon the ground ;
A long, low field of broken things all still upon the sand ;
A row of mounds and crosses—cross on cross and mound on mound ;
A lonely maiden waiting where the wild sea laps the land !

A WOMAN, A POET, A MAN

A WOMAN there was and a poet there was
And a man that was rich as a man could well be;
One laughed with the throng and one toyed with a song
And one built a house by the side of the sea;

And one was as fair as the sun at noon,
And one had his soul from a flame of the gods;
And one was as cold as his damned yellow gold,
But knew how to wager and cover his odds!

Now one heard a song and was pleased with the strain,
And one was in paradise seeing her smile;
But one saw the face that was fair and the grace
Of her body—and slowly bethought him awhile;

Then one saw the house by the side of the sea,
While one, like a fool, wrote the song of his soul;
And one played his game—though he guarded his name—
Nor took with his pleasure a share of the dole;

Now one is a jade in a house by the street,
And one dotes alone in an idiot's cell;
While the one that is free tells in rarest of glee
A certain choice story—and chuckles like hell!

GODS

THE pagan hath made him a god of stone
Or a god of clay;
The man of the East hath a god of his own
In the rising Day.

And you—you have made you a god of a kind,
That you cannot see,
That you seek in your prayers and cannot find;
And you turn to me,
And weep in your hearts for a godless man
With a soul to save.
Alas, though your priests my god would ban—
It is all I have.

THE MISFIT

*OH, he had a sainted mother,
And his dad was on the square,
He could boast an honest brother
And a sister who was fair;
But he didn't take to ways of men,
He couldn't learn the game,
So he hit the trail for God knows where,
And took another name.*

I

He was weary of the city and the puppets in the street,
He was heart-sick of the System's daily lie;
He was sore from ever striving, he was madden'd from
defeat,
He was longing for the land of Do-or-die;
So he wandered forth at midnight when the sleep was
on the town,
While the sons of Mammon slumbered in the night,
And he bade farewell to worry and escaped the city's
frown
And he hied him to the open fields of white.

II

In a God-forsaken corner of Creation where the sky
Meets the shaggy peaks of granite topped with snow
He was picked up in a blizzard and was carried out to die
In a cabin in the valley down below;
He was warmed with hooch and bannock, he was cheered
with voice of man,
He was sung to by the north-wind in the night;
He was greeted by an outlaw host who lived beneath the
ban
Of the well-intentioned souls who love the light.

III

There he caught the golden madness, knew the fever-driven brain,
Learned to pick the virgin pocket on the shore,
Sought to woo the fickle rivers for their cups of yellow grain—
Slept to count his mad-dream-millions by the score;
There he drank with raving diggers till the light of morning sun
Broke in shafts upon the mountain's silver rills;
There he staggered up the canyon when the solo game was done,
Singing ribald songs to wake the sleepy hills.

IV

There he waited till the autumn when the hillsides were afire
With the tongues of livid hue on every limb,
When the heart of men is pensive with a touch of high desire,
And the stars at night take up Creation's hymn;
He had crammed his poke with lucre, he had gorged his greedy soul
With the plunder from a dozen treasure streams;
From a dozen rapid rivers he had sought and taken toll
Of the treasures he had conjured up in dreams.

V

So he took the trail from Nowhere to a city by the sea,
Just to live a spell on trifles with the horde;
Just to drink to pampered minions of a pale humanity,
Or to pray among the chosen of the Lord;
Just to hear the noisy monster roll to wakefulness at
dawn,
Or to foot the blinking highway in the night;
Just to watch a beggared million put their hungry souls
in pawn
While they chase the fickle gleam of their delight.

VI

There he heard the tale of plunder in a land beyond the
sea,
Heard the tramp of grim battalions in the night;
And he caught the whispered challenge from his goddess,
Destiny,
And he stepped out at the call and went to fight;
At Neuve Chapelle and Languemarc he held the field of
red,
With his doughty pals in khaki, till he fell,
And they threw him in a gutter with the gory-visaged
dead—
Silent—nameless—homeless—godless—*shot to hell!*

*Oh, he wore no badge of merit
And he wore no hero's name,
He was well content to share it—
Taint or glory, praise or blame;
He was just a wild one of the kind
The good ones cannot tame;
And his soul went out to—God knows where.
What odds?—he kicked off game!*

THE AWAKENING

HEARD ye the murmur in the street to-night,
A long low murmur in the crowded way?
Saw ye the glimmer of a fluttering light—
A faint, new glimmer like a gleam of day?

Read ye the secret in the toiler's face—
Strange, hidden secret 'neath the seams of pain?
Caught ye the music in his quickened pace—
A lilting music of sublimer strain?

Felt ye the blood-thrill in the proffered hand—
The quickened blood-thrill in the palm of age?
Was it a challenge or a loud command
Pregnant with fire of prophetic rage?

Hearken—the murmur! On the western sky
Lo, the bright symbols of a nation's day!
List—the loud challenge in the people's cry;
A god's hand shapes an empire from the clay!

A LITTLE PHILOSOPHY

WHAT is a world, my boy?

A little rain, a little sun,
A little shore where ripples run,
A little green upon the hill,
A little glade, a little rill,
A little day with skies above,
A little night where shadows move,
A little work for men to do,
A little play for such as you;
A passing night, a coming morn,
A coming love, a passing scorn;
Of blackest cloud a little bit
With silver on the rim of it;
A little trouble, lots of joy—
And there you have a world, my boy!

THE SISTERS

Two sisters there were who were born in one day
Of one saintly mother who dreamed in her soul
Of a World that was fair and a God that was good ;
And each of the two took her own chosen way
To the courts of the gods where stern Destiny stood
With Fate-measured portions of pleasure and dole.

Now both of these sisters were shapely and fair
And equally favoured in graces and smiles ;
But one of them knew that a woman may *dare*—
While the other was artless, nor practised her wiles.

And the one that could dare chose the way of the world,
And smiled upon men and was gay with the throng,
Laughed with red lips to the cup that was red,
Gave her proud challenge and sang her young song,
Till once when but half of her graces were shed
Dame Fortune grew cold and the woman was hurled
From the place where she long had been queen. Then,
 by some,

It was whispered at once—but be that as it may !
Weary and broken she came to her home,
And the mother forgave—in a mother's strange way !

But the other, still young, took the vows of a saint,
And turned from the world and the devil, and gave
Of the best of her days to her vows, for she knew
In the heart of her heart, when a woman would save
A soul that is bred in the flesh, with the taint
Of the blood in her veins, and the flame of it too,
She must stay by her beads. But there came to her life
The big love of a man, and it lay on her soul
Till it burned to the core of her night, and she stole
But a moment to tell him the wish of her heart—
That she might be a woman—and come to be wife!
And there she was found! But at last, when the smart
Of the thing she had done had been eased, while the ban
Of her sect was still heavy—she went to her man!
And in time, when she knelt to her mother in tears,
Her mother forgave her, and hushed her wild fears.

But strange to relate, though the sisters have met,
The one of the world has not pardoned her yet!

THE POET

I WONDERED in an idle hour:
"If God eternal could but give
This soul of mine three lives to live,
How should I spend my three-fold power?"

I thought, "In one I'd long to hold
A world of music in my soul;
I'd play such harmonies as roll
The spheres of heav'n—majestic, bold!"

"Then," thought I, "in the second one,
I'd learn the Master Stroke from God
And paint a face that men would laud
And love until the world was done!"

"And when the third should come to me,
I'd be a poet—last but best!
Or let me wish back all the rest—
I'd be a poet in all three!"

SOMETIMES

SOMETIMES in darkest waters whitest lilies blow;
The wildest seas hush down to sleep serene;
And sometimes where the deep grey shadows come and go
The brightest beams smile lovingly between.

COLONIALS

WE filled your nights with terrible frights, we troubled
your days with fears,
For the youngest sons are the cussedest ones in dignified
families ;
You took us aside in your wounded pride and covered
our heads with tears,
Then gave us a tip on takin' a trip—and bundled us
overseas !

It was, "Poor young beggar, Colonial!"
And, "Oh, you worried us so!
You know we couldn't put up at 'ome
With stuff like you, so we let you roam—
Oh, no—we couldn't, you know!"

We found a berth on the edge of the earth, we settled
and made our prayer;
But we gave small heed to manners or creed, for we
hadn't a soul to save;
We soon forgot such piffle and rot in the things we had
to dare.

When the luck's gone bad and a man's half mad—well,
how should a man behave?

It was, "Oh, you stupid Colonial!"
And, "Ain't they a lubberly class!"
And, "Ain't you been out in the world before?
Oh, Lord, but ain't he a beastly bore!
Haw-haw—the silly young ass!"

When days were good and we felt the blood rise up in
our youthful veins,
We spoke of rights and we dreamed of fights and we
talked to our neighbours then;

But you blinked your eye and you heaved a sigh, and
jollied us for our pains:

"We want no row with our neighbours now!" quoth
John—and we lost again!

It was, "Oh, you pesky Colonial!

By Jove! you nervy young cuss!

An' wot would you do, in the nime of me,
Or w'ere in 'ell do you think you'd be,

My word, if it wasn't for us?"

We took a hand, in a foreign land, at settlin' dust that
rose,

When a poor old cuss built much like us spoke up when
times were bad;

With Buller and Bobs in a few odd jobs we peppered old
John Bull's foes,

And when we'd won and the jobs were done, we told of
the fun we'd had!

It was "Good, you plucky Colonial!

But 'urry back 'ome, old chap!

Oh, you're all right in your own small way,

But take it from us, you've a lot to say—

Be quiet and take a nap!"

We've had to learn, but we'll take our turn—and never a
word to say;

We've given you men and striven again—and Tommy
knows how we stood!

'Twas a blitherin' Hun that started the fun, but we'll
make the bounder pay—

So here's to the Land of the Helpin' Hand—and here's
to the Lion's Brood!

And it's "Oh, you fightin' Colonial!"

And, "Blime, you've grown a lot!

We ain't got nothin' at all on you—

But you're goin' to stay till the fightin's through,

Ain't you, old top, eh, what!"

HIS INSPIRATION

ONE face he met—one in a seething throng;
One form divine moved to him from the street;
And for a space, a little space, along
The great, lone highway of his life his feet

Fell lightlier on the path, his halting note
Broke into lilting melodies that fell
On wondering ears, and in the verse he wrote
Beat the sweet cadence of a silver bell.

One face he met, one form divine, and then,
Bold and unbeaten, with a nerve of steel,
He took a man's place in a world of men,
Sharing the day's return of woe or weal.

But once—and for a very little space!
And where the mad battalions shocked at night,
He caught the vision of a perfect face
Above the lines—and leaped into the fight!

CHRIST IN FLANDERS

BUT once across the field of blood,
In the black silence of an awful night,
A voice moved from the shaken wood
Where all day long the sudden flame
Had started from the tubes of death ;
But once it moved—and with his last sweet breath
One who had fallen in the day's mad fight
Whispered a sacred name !

It breathed above the sodden trench
Where the grey figures in the moving breeze,
Hot-heavy with the growing stench,
Kept silent watch before their dead ;
And on the worn, fight-wearied brain
There broke a sweet dream of a flowered plain
With violet scent and balmy breath of trees
And daisies in the mead !

The watcher in the living gloom
Where shifting shadows trick the heavy eye
And monsters in the darkness loom,
Heard once, but once, that moving voice ;
And on his soul the vision came—
He heard a child-tongue faintly lisp his name,
He saw his own sweet children trooping by
Singing, “Oh, world, rejoice !”

But once across that field of blood,
In the black silence of that awful night,
From out the hot shell-shattered wood
It came, or seemed to come, and fell
Like a sweet dream of perfect love
Shed on a perfect soul ; and from above
Upon the field was shed so much of light
That men forgot their Hell !

THE MONUMENT

SHE stood in a city square;
Haggard she was, and worn and pale,
A thing of pity who once was fair;
Weeping about her, her children stood,
Voicing their wants in mournful wail—
Fatherless, homeless, starveling brood!

Above her an image of stone,
Stolid and chill, with rayless eyes
Looked down on the woman wan and lone—
Symbol of honour and vaunted deed
Such as a king triumphant buys,
Paying his price in hearts that bleed!

A poet who saw the two from afar
Looked and passed and wondered alone
Which was the symbol of savage war—
Woman and brood, or image of stone!

THANKSGIVING

A WAR-LORD sat in his place apart
And smiled to himself in his ease;
The struggle was over, the victory bought,
The guns were all silent, the battles all fought,
And he felt of himself in his pride, and he thought,
"I have lengthened my shores—I have widened my
seas!"

And he thanked his good God from his heart.

A woman sat in her place apart
And sobbed in her sorrow alone;
The men of the town had come home from the fray—
Not all of the men—it is ever the way;
And she mused to herself in the gloom of her day,
"I have still got my soul—I will keep it my own!"
And the good God thanked her from his heart!

PREMONITION

THREE lilies grew in a garden nook
As pure as the sunshine steeped in dew,
Or as beams that fall on a babbling brook
A-ripple with rhyme the glad day through;

But I dreamed that one of the lilies drooped
In the cruel sun at the height of day,
And I saw a stranger who came and stooped
And plucked the lily and took it away.

Three sisters paused in their evening walk
To love three lilies a-nod nearby;
And one of them took from a withered stalk
A faded lily about to die;

Just yestereve we were sisters three,
But to-night we are two and must weep alone;
And a memory burns in the heart of me
Of a dream and a beautiful face that's gone.

A WOMAN'S SONG

*HEAR the song that a woman sings
All day long, though the deep night brings
Hunger of heart and madness of brain,
Day-hours of loneliness, night-hours of pain,
For him who will never come home again.*

I

Red as the low sun in an August sky
When lights are fading where the meadows lie,
Where all day long the men make hay—
So red the rose beside the way!

II

Red as the crimson of the fragrant leaves
Full-mantled where the magic Craftsman weaves
His colours smitten through with fire—
So red the blood where pierced the briar!

III

Red as the leaping blood of full-flood youth
Ecstatic with the first impulse of truth,
Seeing the heaven it hopes to gain—
So red the lips that smiled at pain!

*This the song that a woman sings,—
This her challenge to high-born kings,
Dauntless still though she weeps alone,
Dreaming her dream of a day that is gone—
Singing her song till the day is done.*

THE HUMAN CHRIST

LONG, long ago, dear Christ, when Thou did'st lie,
And smiling upward in Thy mother's face,
Pressed closer to her breast to feel the warmth
Of motherhood, I wonder if the grace
That heaven gave Thee hid from her the glow
That every tender mother yearns to know.

I wonder if upon Thine infant brow
The dignity of heav'n so strangely lay,
That to her eager heart there came no joy
At seeing, as she watched Thee day by day,
The sweet dependence of the child she bore
That makes the tender mother cherish more.

Oh, Christ, unknown to Thee while Thou did'st sleep,
She bowed and with her fingers touched Thy head,
And from her soft eyes as she kissed Thee, fell
The burning tears that only mothers shed.
And Thou, Christ, equally with us art blest,
That, next to God, Thy mother loved Thee best.

THE LAST REST

WHEN I've fought my last grim battle,
When I've stormed my last red hill,
When the maxim's stormy rattle
And the big gun's boom is still ;
When my last big push is over
And I drop where old pals lie
In a ragged shell-hole's cover,
And I grip old hands—and die ;

Lay me where old friends that proved me,
On the field in days a-gone,
Staunch old friends of mine who loved me,
Wait their Captain's call at Dawn ;
Range us for our lazy slumber
In one billet as of yore,
Where no stubborn cares encumber
While we dream our battles o'er.

Seek the breezes of the Westland
Where they wait beyond the sea,
Breezes from the last, the best land,
Land of Youth so dear to me !
Lade them with old dreams of childhood,
Wild perfumes of prairie flowers,
Scent of pine-trees in the wildwood
New-distilled from summer showers ;

Seek them when the year is falling,
When the grey clouds top the height,
When the lone wild-goose is calling
Where he passes in the night ;
When the long fields gleam with yellow,
Ere the thresher's hum has ceased,
When the harvest fruits hang mellow
In the orchards of the East ;

Seek them where the old white wizard
 Puts the lakes in icy chains,
Where the southward driven blizzard
 In its fury whips the plains;
Lade the blasts with winter's howling
 Where the northern ghost-lights play,
And the lone coyote goes prowling
 In the moonlight for its prey;

Seek them still upon the Maytime,
 In the first new flush of Spring,
When the wild birds flood the daytime
 With their ceaseless carolling;
Seek them when the saps are streaming
 And the warm sun wakes the rills,
When the crocus-cups are dreaming
 Furry-purpled on the hills;

Seek them, lade them, slip the tether,
 Send them out across the sea,
Show them where we lie together,
 Friends of mine who fell with me;
We would have them ever lending
 Charm to dreams that never fail
Where the homing souls are wending
 Far a-down the Great White Trail!

HOME!

(A French peasant returns to his former home in a district evacuated by the Germans.)

SEE, yonder lies the place, below the hill—
That broken thing—that shattered four-square pile
Of tumbled ruin by the little stream—
That crazy, shapeless thing that makes me smile
To find it thus, and think we called it home!
Smile? Yes, why not? Smile or go raving mad!
To think that once within those crumpled walls
The ceaseless chatter of a little lad,
Our little Pierre drew words of stern rebuke
That brought him always in a flood of tears
To *mère* Marie, my woman. On the right,
There where that bit of tottering front appears
Just waiting to come down, once grew a vine
Full-leaved and heavy green; and just above,
Where the white light comes through, my little Pierre
Made, when he grew, a place to keep his dove
When it was moulting. Once, within a room
That lay behind yon window near the eaves
I waited through a long hot night in June
Till the pale dawn came through the fluttering leaves
That made a frame about the little square—
Waited and watched the long slow hours creep by—
And heard, midway between the passing night
And coming day, the first faint muffled cry
Of a child new-born and took the drooping hand
Of my Marie and told her all was well.

Then came a day when the bright August sky
Darkened at once, and broke like a screaming hell
Straight from the clouds at midday! Then for days—
Long lines of weeping women, cursing men,
And weary children who could cry no more
For utter weariness! And now again
I stand alone! The quiet has come down—
And such a quiet—God! Or have I come
A dead man to the skirts of some strange hell?
Christ, there's a joke for you—I have come home!

THE RIVULET

A STREAMLET on the mountain's crest
Saw from afar the ocean's breast,
And sprang for joy that it might run
Beneath the blue sky and the sun
 Straight to its far-off rest.

But half a leap, its will denied,
A club-moss turned its course aside ;
A root once tripped it, but it fled
The faster, and in running spread
 Its laughter far and wide

And then a rock cried, "Halt, what speed?"
And on one side a saucy reed
Put forth an arm to hold him back ;
He slyly took another track,
 Nor paid them any heed.

And once, at night, quite lost was he,
Nor could he guess where he might be ;
But slowly he climbed up a steep,
And from a hill-top, with one leap,
 He found the great, wide sea !

THE POTTER

I FOUND the Potter in his shop ; all round
The vessels stood fresh from the hand
That fashioned them ; some lay upon the ground
In fragments, for the mind that planned
And shaped them from the shapeless clay could brook
No imperfection ; from the door
That let the afternoon in we could look
Out on the city where the roar
Of busy markets vexed the day. And then—
Sudden there came a bugle blast,
A roll of drums, a sound of marching men !
And straight the long files hurried past !
Ceased then the roar of markets, and instead
The sullen distant roar of guns ;
And all night long came straggling men that bled,
The shattered fragments of a nation's sons.
And when the day came with its weight of care
Upward I climb the narrow way
To where the hill's brow topped the town—and there
I found the Potter at his clay.
I spoke. "All night, my friend, has come the sound
Of battle crashing through the gloom ;
Of heaven-splitting thunders, and around
Broke from the hills the voice of doom !
All night—and now, adown the dusty way,
The drooping broken line of men,
And women weeping in the city ! Say,
Doth God destroy the world again ?"
He showed me broken vessels, row on row ;
Then led me to a room where stood
A perfect urn, sun-bathed in glory. "Lo !"
Cried he. "Through pain—to perfect good !"

THE DEATH OF FANCY

Is this the place, then? Did I come
But yestereve and stand tip-toe
With breath indrawn to catch the hum
Of drowsy Nature crooning low?

And oh, what lullabies she sang!
Just yonder, where the waters gleam,
I saw the willow leaf-tips hang
Like slender fingers in the stream,

And dip and lift and dip again
In music sweet, as liquid beads
Slipped back like drops of diamond rain
And lost themselves among the reeds.

What strange, mysterious lights were shed
From bubbles floating on the stream!
What shadows moved with elfin tread,
Dim shapes that fluttered in a dream!

A dragon-fly among the sedge,
An evening bird-song chirruped o'er,
A dead leaf at the water's edge
Moored like a shallop to the shore;

A sylvan breath of sweetened air
And purple shadows, soft and cool,
On deep still waters, sleeping where
The day is mirrored in a pool—

Oh, whither has the wonder fled
That once was here? Is there no shore,
No glade where mystery is bred?
And shall I never feel it more?

SECRETS

I

RED rose, whence came this passion-flame
That burns so deep in thee?
“A maiden stooped to breathe my name,
And touched her lips to me!”

II

Fair lily, whence the purity?
Whence came thy robe of white?
“A maiden’s finger-tips touched me,
And I am clothed in light!”

III

Whence came the secret of thy charms,
Sweet maid? Who gave it thee?
“Love took me in his folded arms,
And whispered it to me!”

AFTER STRIFE

I WONDER if they ever dream
Beneath yon silent hill
Where every face is white in sleep
And every heart is still.

For if they do—ah, if they do—
And I come there to dream,
I want to dream about a hut
That stands beside a stream;

A little hut, a little stream,
A little hill hard by,
A smoky bed of smould'ring coals
Where blackened embers lie;

Four little walls of dove-tailed pines,
A sodden roof, a floor
Of mouldy earth where sunlight falls
A-slant through open door;

A little path that angling runs
To where the trail comes down
Across the hills from Far Away,
Where men have built a town;

A little trail where strangers pass
And bid the time of day,
Or pause a while to fill a pipe
And rest beside the way.

Let others dream—if dream they must—
Of mansions yet to be;
A hut, a stream, a hill, a trail—
Dear God, give these to me!

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